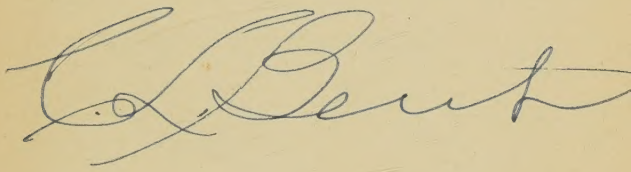
TALKS TO PROBATIONERS

WILBUR F. SHERIDAN



CERTIFICATE OF PROBATION.

.....

was received by me on probation in the Methodist Episcopal Church at

.....

.....*Conference,*

.....*19*.....

.....

Preacher in Charge.

CERTIFICATE OF MEMBERSHIP

.....

having received the sacrament of baptism, and being recommended by the Leaders' and Stewards' Meeting, was admitted to membership in the Methodist Episcopal Church at .....

..... *Conference,*

..... *19* .....

.....

Preacher in Charge.

TALKS

TO

PROBATIONERS.

BY

WILBUR F. SHERIDAN.

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PREFACE.

THE following addresses comprehend the talks that I have given to our probationers for several years past, and within a few months to my entire congregation. We had not thought of putting them into book form until their publication was requested by an honored pastor in Detroit for use among his young people. The conviction that they might be of general usefulness was deepened by the unusual interest which their public delivery occasioned, many coming from other Churches to hear the series. It is an encouraging thing that so dry a subject should have elicited so deep an interest. Primarily, however, these addresses were intended for probationers and those yet young in Christian knowledge.

It would be folly to begin the training of probationers with a complete outline of Church history. Everybody is repelled by a skeleton, and a complete outline is only that. I have proceeded on the theory that one or two vivid pictures from each great epoch of the Church, with the most important historical connections,

will be the best method to leave a clear and fairly accurate impression of the development of the Church.

It is hoped that the interest of that large class of young people who never think of reading Church history may be awakened by the unconventional and story-like form in which this primer of Church history and polity is cast, and that thereby some may be led to the feast that is ready for them in such histories of Methodism as Stevens's or Buckley's, and in such general Church histories as Neander's, Schaff's, and Sheldon's.

In the preparation of this little work I have consulted, in addition to the authors just mentioned, Mosheim's Institutes, Blackburn's History of the Christian Church, and various articles in McClintock & Strong's Encyclopedia.

WILBUR F. SHERIDAN.

PONTIAC, MICH., January, 1900.

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CHAPTER I.

THE APOSTOLIÇ CHURCH.

IF we were thinking only of the time we should call this chapter "The Early Church," for we write of the Church of the first three Christian centuries. But we are thinking of quality of doctrine and life, as well as the time involved; hence we call it "The Apostolic Church;" for during the first three centuries after Christ the Church kept close to the apostolic ideal.

The word "church" in the New Testament is the translation of the Greek word *ekklesia*, meaning "called out." Christians are therefore "called-out" men and women—called out from the sins of the world. Nothing was more absolute with the early Christians than that they must separate themselves from the world. So strong was this feeling that it grew into the abuse, at length, of withdrawing into deserts and monasteries, away from all contact with men—an entire perversion of the idea. In being a called-out company, and that only, lies the root of all Pharisaism also. The early Church

escaped the dangers of both Pharisaism and monasticism by being apostolic—"sent out" as well as called out. The word apostolic is from a compound Greek word, *apostello*, meaning "to send forth." They were to be a sent-forth company as well as a called-forth company. Called out of the world, and then sent back into it again to heal its wounds and minister to all its crying needs! In these two ideas we have the two halves of the ideal Church for any and every age. The union of them made the apostolic Church mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds. Called out from the world, it was kept pure; sent back into living touch with the world, it was kept sympathetic and saving.

Jerusalem, at first, was the center. Like rays from a central sun the gospel heralds poured forth from the city where Christ had died, risen, and ascended on high, and where they had received the Pentecostal anointing of the Holy Ghost. Peter preached in Jerusalem, Samaria, Cesarea, Antioch, to the large Jewish colony in Babylon, and possibly, also, in Rome. John preached in Jerusalem first, then in Samaria, Ephesus, and doubtless other cities. Paul, when he was added to the ranks of apostles, gave himself to the Gentile world, found-

ing Churches throughout Asia Minor and Southern Europe. Everywhere he found the way paved for the announcement of the gospel by the colonies of Jews,—traders always,—and their synagogues. The ever-present Roman roads made travel easy.

But it was not only the apostles who preached; every Christian was a witness and preacher of the Word. Stephen was appointed to provide food for the poor. But he preached as he went. And when the infant Church was scattered abroad by persecution after the martyrdom of Stephen, we are told they went everywhere preaching the Word. The tongue of fire had been given them. With it they assailed every existing evil habit and institution. With it they burned their way through every obstacle and into the hearts of multitudes, and those multitudes, in turn, became witnesses of the same blessed truths.

The apostolic Church gained converts from every class of society. Some people of wealth or social position were gained: such as Philemon, and the "elect lady" to whom John wrote his second epistle, who had a house large enough to accommodate the local Church; and those "of Cæsar's household," of whom Paul speaks; and Manaen, the foster-brother of Herod.

Some of the officers of the Roman army, and large numbers of the soldiers, threw in their lot with the Christians. Yet "not many mighty, not many great were called." The mass of converts were from the humble classes; and not only from the humble but from the vicious classes. Liars, thieves, drunkards, debauchees—the worst people there were—accepted the Cross and were transformed by it.

The Church spread to Northern Africa, Gaul (now France), the British Isles, and Germany, as well as throughout Western Asia. By the year 300, according to Gibbon's estimate, one-twentieth of the Roman Empire was Christian. Some authorities say one-tenth and even one-fifth. Such was the apostolic Church in action.

But the Church had to stand under fire. Again and again persecution raged against it. Once every fifteen years, on an average, did the Church undergo a persecution during those first three centuries. The Christians had been baptized with water. This was their baptism with blood. While not all these persecutions were general, no one knew but that they would be. Each generation had to undergo the fire and blood test. It was a blessing in disguise,

for it kept the Church pure until the divineness of her origin had been effectually shown.

Two martyr scenes will illustrate all. An old man is arrested, A. D. 155, for refusing to offer sacrifices to the gods and to Cæsar. "Who is it?" the people ask, as he is being taken to his execution. "Polycarp—the aged bishop, said to have been a disciple of the apostle John!" The officer who leads him is kind-hearted, and whispers in his ear: "Why not save thy life by saying 'Lord Cæsar,' and offering a sacrifice to the gods?" "Nay!" said the aged saint. Three times he thus refuses. Now they reach the place of torture. A great mob greets his arrival with yells of hatred. Once more he is asked to renounce Christ. "Renounce Christ!" cries the old hero; "eighty and six years have I served him, and he has never done me wrong. How, then, can I curse my King and Savior?" As the fagots are heaped about him he turns his failing eyes toward heaven. Listen! He is praying. "Omnipotent Lord God, Father of Jesus Christ! I bless Thee that Thou hast counted me worthy, in this hour, to take a place among thy martyrs, and to drink of the cup of thy Christ!" In a chariot of flame his soul leaps to its God.

But here is another scene, this time in Carthage, early in the third century. A pagan father pleads with his daughter, in prison and condemned to death for being a Christian, to renounce her faith in Christ. Tenderly, but firmly, Perpetua refuses. Then he brings from her home her little child, and beseeches her for the child's sake not to send herself to the grave. Could ever woman's duty be more hardly reconciled? With breaking heart she gazes on her babe, but commending it to God, still chooses Christ above all. She is led forth to be thrown to the wild cow of the amphitheater. A slave woman, Felicitas, is led forth with her, and for the same crime—serving Christ. The mad cow of the arena wounds but does not kill them. A gladiator is sent to finish the work. Perpetua and Felicitas meet him without a tremor. They embrace each other in a last Christian farewell, and baring their necks to the stroke are numbered with the martyrs before the Throne.

How real and precious the love of Christ must have been to them, that they thus willingly would die for it! God grant that the same deathless devotion to Jesus may fill our hearts, little flock of beginners in Christ!

CHAPTER II.

THE ECLIPSE OF THE CHURCH.

A BLAZING cross in the sky! And underneath it the words, *In hoc signo vinces*—"In this sign thou shalt conquer." This an ambitious Roman general saw, or claimed he saw, as he returned with his army through Gaul toward Rome. He wanted to be ruler of Rome. Whether he saw the sign or not, the cross had become a good symbol to conjure with, so it was emblazoned on his standards. Constantine was successful in becoming emperor, and henceforth became the patron of the Christian Church. He discountenanced pagan religions in every way, except by the use of violence. He gave his Christian subjects preference over his pagan ones when he appointed provincial governors and other high officers of state. He restored to Christians the property wrested from them by pagan persecutions, and rebuilt the churches that had been destroyed. He favored Christianity in every possible way, except by becoming him-

self a pattern Christian; that, although he was baptized and came into the Church, he never did become.

But even before the emperor thus made Christianity the state religion, the Church had become strong and rich. Godliness has the promise of both worlds. The poor boys that come into the Church to-day are the rich men of to-morrow. The rude tribes that accept Christianity to-day are strong nations a hundred years hence. It is so now; it was so then. Hence, before Constantine accepted Christianity, churches existed in almost every city and village of the Roman Empire. In Rome alone there were forty churches and fifty thousand members. Organizations of Christians existed in almost every legion of the army. That is why I say Constantine found the cross a good symbol to rally followers. Christians everywhere acknowledged it openly. They were respectable and respected. The offense of the cross had not gone, but it was going.

Up to this time the Church had remained comparatively pure in doctrine and life. Its purity, its consecration, and its flaming zeal had made its banner like the sun climbing to its meridian. But there came over it an

eclipse—not suddenly, like the dropping of a curtain, but a gradual eclipse. Not a total eclipse, either—for there has never been a generation when the pure religion of Jesus has not had some witnesses—but an eclipse that darkened and deepened for twelve long centuries, bringing shame and contempt upon the name Christian, until the sun burst through once more with something of its original glory in the Protestant Reformation.

First of all, and chiefly, it was an eclipse of the moral and spiritual life. With wealth and power came worldliness. It was right for the Church to be in the world. It was wrong to get the world into the Church. A boat is to be in the water; but it is disastrous for water to get into the boat. So it proved. When men saw that the cross was a passport to political honors they made haste to embrace it. Hypocrisy became common. Thitherto it had been kept out by persecution, if by nothing else.

Moreover, many Christians yielded to the temptations that come with power and honor. Men who had started with courage and self-sacrifice became lax and ease-seeking. The clergy preferred the comforts and elegancies of the city to the plainer, simpler life of the vil-

lages. Contact with rich laymen brought the itch for gold to the clergy—the Church's Achan wedge in all ages. Luxury was the Delilah-lap which many a Christian Samson sought to his undoing. The motto of the monks became, "Short prayers and long sausages." When Chrysostom became bishop of Constantinople, in the latter part of the fourth century, he found that his predecessor had been living in a palace. He stripped it of its splendid ornaments and sold them for the poor, and lived simply. But there were few Chrysostoms.

With the growth of the Church came the multiplication of positions of honor. Grades of officers and ministries in the Church were established. The Church of the apostles' day was satisfied with two grades in the ministry, deacons and elders. But at the time of which we write the dignity of the clergy had become so great that they could not possibly perform the humbler ministries of the house of God; hence inferior orders of clergy were constituted to attend to these, while they themselves performed the important functions. Thus we begin to hear of "doorkeepers," "readers," "exorcists," "acolytes," "sub-deacons," "deacons," and priests; and of bishops, archbishops, and patriarchs, and at length of pope!

Yet Jesus did not hesitate to wash his disciples' feet!

Not only so, but with the multiplication of important positions came the rivalries, often degenerating into disgraceful strife, for these positions. And among the clergy of rank there was jealousy and contention as to precedence. Gregory Nazianzen, one of the best and greatest men of his age, was led to cry out, in 380: "Would to Heaven there were no primacy, no eminence of place, no tyrannical precedence of rank; that we might be known by pre-eminence of virtue alone! But as the case now stands, the distinction of a seat at the right hand or the left, or in the middle, or at a higher or lower place, or of going before or beside each other, has given rise to many disorders among us, and plunged multitudes into ruin."

Many noble men, such as Gregory and Chrysostom and Augustine, labored to stem the incoming tide of worldliness, but in vain.

Charles Kingsley gives us, in "Hypatia," a vivid picture, not only of this strife for precedence, but of the fierce and unchristian character of much that passed for gospel zeal in the fifth century. It is a matter of history that a Christian mob in Alexandria seized the

beautiful and accomplished, though pagan, teacher, Hypatia, as she was riding through the streets of Alexandria, and literally tore her to pieces. That was only an early example of countless crimes that were committed in the name of Christianity in the twelve centuries of the Church's eclipse.

The sad eclipse which the Church underwent will appear less strange if we remember that a succession of catastrophes overtook Christian Southern Europe during those times. The catastrophes were avalanches, not of earth and ice, but of men, and those men barbarians—raw heathen for the greater part, that came sweeping down upon Southern Europe from Northern and Northeastern Europe, in the fifth and sixth centuries. They almost buried the Christian civilization. In our own America, in the past fifty years, 30,000,000 Europeans, almost wholly alien in character to the ideals of earlier American civilization as handed down to us from our fathers, have greatly weakened and changed those ideals, on the subject of the Sabbath, liquor, etc. It is not to be wondered at that an even more pronounced effect was had by these barbarians on the Christian lands they conquered. The Church compromised with these barba-

rians in many ways. There is little doubt that many of the practices that grew up in the Roman Catholic Church were the result of this—of taking pagan rites, and baptizing them with a Christian name.

With such departures from primitive spirituality and morality as we have noticed, it was inevitable that there would be a departure in teaching also. Hence the eclipse was one of doctrine as well as of life. Such doctrines arose as salvation by good works instead of by faith; the offering of Christ anew in the mass; the doctrine of purgatory, and the power of the clergy to release souls from it; the worship of Mary, the adoration of relics, and praying to saints; the use of Latin only in the prayers of the Church; the doctrine of enforced clerical celibacy; the practice of the confessional, and many other practices and doctrines that are departures from the primitive purity and simplicity of the Church, chief among which, and a very Pandora's Box of evils to mankind, the doctrine that tradition is of equal authority with the Word of God. By all these things was the Church of Christ dragged down to a level, at times, almost of surrounding paganism, and was herself pierced through with many sorrows.

CHAPTER III.

THE RISE OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH.

SOME years ago there was much rivalry between Chicago, Cincinnati, and St. Louis, as to which had the largest population. Chicago forged ahead, and then the rivalry was transferred to Chicago and New York. There is no secret in the fact that, in the Methodist Episcopal Church, New York and Chicago are the chief centers of influence. It arises from the commercial and political importance of those two great cities, and is perfectly natural.

In the same way in the days of early Christianity, several great cities were centers of influence; notably, Alexandria, Antioch, Byzantium (Constantinople), Carthage, and Rome.

Each Christian Church, in those early days, was self-governing. Its pastor was called bishop or presbyter. The Churches were formed first in cities. From these they spread to surrounding towns and villages, the Church in the city maintaining an oversight of these country

Churches, and the pastor of the head Church in the city being the chief pastor of the rural congregations as well. It was a perfectly natural thing that these chief pastors in the city should be called on frequently to settle disputes, questions of doctrine, and the like. Hence they grew in importance and influence, and came at length to be called by a different title from the pastors of the less important Churches. The latter came to be called "priests," although they were divided at length into several grades; while the chief pastors in the cities appropriated the title of bishop. By and by, as the number of cities and bishops grew, the bishops of the very large cities came to be called patriarchs. And what had at first grown up as a matter of convenience—the referring of disputes, questions of doctrine, etc., to these chief pastors in the cities—came at length to be claimed by them as their right; in the same way that a piece of public land, long allowed to be used by some private individual, is at length claimed by him, and his right is maintained by law. In the claims of these city bishops was the germ of Roman Catholicism.

It turned out, naturally enough, that these most prominent bishops, or patriarchs—as the

bishops of Antioch, Jerusalem, Alexandria, Constantinople, and Rome, came to be called—fell into more or less of rivalry and jealousy among themselves, especially between those nearest each other. The degree to which these were indulged depended on the personal character of the men. Theophilus of Alexandria became so jealous of the popularity and success of Chrysostom of Constantinople, that he plotted against him and secured his banishment by the secular power.

With the changes of years all the cities declined in importance except Constantinople and Rome. These grew in power, and, especially after Constantinople became the capital of the empire, were bitter rivals. Rome had a succession of able and ambitious bishops, who came to claim more and more authority over surrounding Churches. And at length the bishop of Rome claimed to have authority over the whole Church, basing it on a tradition that St. Peter had founded the Church in Rome, and that Peter was the bishop of the twelve apostles! It is a strange fact that no one, not even the bishops of Rome themselves, ever thought of making such a claim until after Peter had been dead for over a hundred years. And the claim was never made until the rivalry between

the bishops had grown acute. The claims of the Roman bishop were repudiated again and again by such Church leaders as Irenæus of Lyons, and Cyprian of Carthage, in the West, and by the Churches of the East generally. But as the other cities declined in importance, the Church at Rome was able gradually to extend her rule over the other Western Churches. The Eastern Churches looked to Constantinople for guidance. The result finally was the split of the Christian Church into two branches: the Eastern Church, with its headquarters at Constantinople, until it fell into Turkish possession, and with its headquarters now at St. Petersburg; and the Western, or Roman Catholic Church, with its headquarters at Rome.

About the idea of the spiritual and ecclesiastical lordship of the Church at Rome has grown the most remarkable piece of human machinery the world has ever seen. In action it is a flying wedge; in repose, a Gibraltar wall. It is complete in the gradation of positions created and the assignment of duties to those places, and it is complete in the appeal which these various positions make to the ambitions of the various grades of workers. The man in the lower position always has before him the higher, beckoning him up, and so on

and on, up the terraced heights. The door-keeper sees above him the reader; the reader sees above him the acolyte; the acolyte sees the sub-deacon: the sub-deacon the deacon; the deacon the full-fledged priest; the priest would be an archdeacon; the archdeacon longs for a bishopric; the bishop would be an archbishop; the archbishop dreams of the cardinal's red hat; and the cardinal wonders if it could be possible he might succeed the supreme pontiff, the vicegerent of Christ on earth!

I do not say that there are not good men in this great machine. Doubtless there are many of them. They have been schooled in their belief, and their belief still has much of the gospel in it. But I do say that there are overflowing historical evidences to show that this great machine had its origin and development in carnal human ambition—in love of power and wealth and honor; and that it claims the exercise of powers too great to be safely intrusted to any man or body of men on earth —powers, the exercise of which has wrought untold misery in the world.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION.

ONE day in 1517, as a German monk sat in the confessional of his cloister, in Wittenburg, Germany, some of his people came to confession and admitted some very gross sins. The conscientious monk refused them absolution until they should have undergone the penance required by the Church. Whereupon these people drew from their pockets signed "indulgences," from one John Tetzel, an authorized indulgence-seller, and demanded absolution on the strength of these documents. The priest refused, and on the following Sunday announced from the pulpit that no such indulgences would be recognized by him. And not only that, but he denounced in scathing language the whole system of indulgence-selling. The monk was Martin Luther, and his act was the beginning of the Protestant Reformation.

The system of indulgences grew up thus: In the early Church, during times of perse-

cution, it frequently happened that some Christians would renounce Christianity to escape persecution. When the storm had passed, they would return and desire re-admission to Church fellowship. The Churches, however, decreed that, as proofs to the community of the sincerity of their repentance, they must undergo certain penances before they could be restored to the Church. The most common penance was for the offender to confess his sins, standing before the church-door in the garb and attitude of a mourner. Sometimes pilgrimages were required, and during the Crusades enlisting in the war against the Turks was a common penance. One of the most remarkable scenes in history was that of Henry IV, emperor of Germany, standing barefoot in the snow before the door of Gregory VII, the Roman pontiff, pleading for restoration to the Church. The distinction was made that it was the temporal and not the eternal punishment of the sins that was thus washed away; but that distinction was practically lost sight of, when, later, it was taught that the pains of purgatory could be remitted in like manner. Worst of all, the custom grew up, first, of permitting rich men to hire monks to undergo these penances for them, and then, logically

enough, of permitting them to pay so much money into the Church treasury instead of undergoing the penance; and the remission of the penalty thus given was called an indulgence.

It was the greatest thing for the papal treasury that ever happened. The money fairly poured into it. But it was one of the peculiarities of the popes that they never had enough money. Other palaces must be erected, more elegant cathedrals must be built, a greater number of papal soldiers and attendants at the papal court must be maintained; in a word, in addition to carrying forward all the work of a great Church, with the legitimate expenses attached to it, the attempt was made, and has been continued to this day, to keep up the court and style of life of an earthly king, the pope claiming to be the temporal head as well as the spiritual ruler of all the nations of the earth. We of the Protestant Churches know nothing of what it means to raise large amounts of money for the Church. All that we give to-day is a mere drop in the bucket compared to the sums that were obtained in one way and another in the times of which I write. But of all financial methods employed, that of indulgence-selling

was the most profitable. Europe was farmed out into districts. The contract for selling these indulgences was sold to the highest bidder, and he, in turn, sublet the contract to yet others. John Tetzel was one of these subcontractors, and that part of Germany was his territory in which the brave little monk and college professor, Martin Luther, lived. It had come to pass, also, that the indulgence-sellers were permitted to grant indulgences for sins yet to be committed as well as for sins past. The sellers were accustomed to visiting the fairs and hawking their wares there, a good deal as the patent-medicine venders do at our county fairs. Imagine the scene of the notoriously immoral Tetzel, selling his wares: "Right this way for your indulgences! Right this way now! You drop the money in the box, and away go your sins! You who have friends in purgatory, right this way! The moment your money strikes the bottom of the box, your dear one's soul flies out of purgatorial fires!"

Yet this was by no means the only evil against which Protestantism contended. At the close of Chapter II the abuses in doctrine that had grown up are mentioned. The sacrilegious mass, the worship of Mary, and the

invocation of the saints, the adoration of images and relics, and, above all, the taking away of the Bible from the people, and the liberty of the individual interpretation of the Word of God,—these were abuses so great and awful that it is not to be wondered at that the people sunk lower and lower in sin and in superstition. Mosheim, the German historian of the eighteenth century, quotes Burmann, a still earlier historian, as saying of the clergy themselves: "Most of the clergy led luxurious and jovial lives in the daily commission of sins, and squandered in the gratification of lusts those funds which the preceding generations had consecrated to God and to the relief of the poor. Most of them treated the people subject to their control much more harshly than the civil magistrates and princes treated their dependents. The greater part of the priests, on account of their indolence, their unchastity, their avarice, their love of pleasure, their ignorance, and their levity, were regarded with utter contempt, not only by the wise and good, but also by the common people."

Much of this was known to the scholarly Luther, and had been the cause of growing discontent with him and with very many of

the best men of the Church; indeed, two centuries before, John Huss and Savonarola, two of the greatest men the Church ever produced, had been put to death for crying out against these abuses. And not only they, but multitudes of humbler men had suffered torture or death for daring to worship God according to the dictates of their own conscience, and for teaching others the true way. The Poor Men of Lyons and the Waldenses of the Alps valleys were examples of those who kept alive a pure faith under severest persecutions. It was of these that Milton wrote:

"Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughtered saints whose bones
Lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold—
E'en them who kept thy sacred truths of old!"

The indulgence-selling of John Tetzel was simply the match that lit the conflagration that had long been preparing. Martin Luther nailed a paper containing ninety-five propositions attacking the sale of indulgences, and the pope for permitting it, to his church door at Wittenburg. All the region was aroused. A long series of disputes and attacks between Luther and his friends on one side, and the representatives of the pope on the other, ended at length in the pope issuing a

bull expelling Luther from the Church, which bull Luther publicly burned, and with it the canon law of the Roman Catholic Church, thus severing his relation to that Church. And when Luther went out, a large part of Germany went out with him. All Europe was in a turmoil. Led by such great scholars and heroic men as Melanchthon and Zwingli and Calvin and Luther, hundreds of thousands of the best and most thoughtful of the Church came out from her to form the Churches now called Protestant. Many princes took the side of the Reformers, and greatly aided the cause; for without their protection, Luther and the other leaders would speedily have suffered the fate of Huss and Savonarola.

Wyclif's translation of the Bible into English in the fourteenth century, and the preaching of such men as Bilney and Latimer and Ridley in the sixteenth, did much to prepare the way for the Reformation in England. The immediate cause of the secession of the Church in England from the Church of Rome was the anger of Henry VIII, England's king, over the refusal of the pope to grant him a divorce from his wife. It was unfortunate for Protestantism that Henry broke the tie that bound the Church in England to Rome; yet he

did, and declared himself to be the head of the English Church. Nevertheless, though it was an outward Protestantism rather than an inward one that was thus created, it opened the way for the free dissemination of Protestant doctrines, the tyranny of the pope was thrown off, and, best of all, the Bible could be freely read by any and all of the people. So in England grew up the Church of England, and later the Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and Baptists, and other Protestant Churches who believed the work of reformation ought to be carried further than the Church of England was willing to go; while on the Continent—not without fearful bloodshed and suffering—grew up the Lutheran and other reformed Churches.

CHAPTER V.

THE BEGINNING OF METHODISM.

"BE a good man, John, and a Tory!" Such was the substance of a sermon preached by a Church of England divine to a congregation of one, that assembled to hear him on a Sunday in the early part of the 18th century. And "John" was the sexton! All through England the churches at this time were ill attended. The masses of the people never crossed their thresholds. Their morals were in an awful condition. Drunkenness, Sabbath-breaking, profanity, and vicious amusements were the rule. Literature was unclean, and the practices of high society more so. Infidelity was the boast of the cultured. The ministry, for the greater part, frequented the ale-house more than the house of God. They were a card-playing, fox-hunting, liquor-drinking body of men, that manifested little concern either for others' or their own salvation. It was the rarest exception to find a clergyman who claimed any personal knowledge of the grace of God. The clergy were supported by the

State, being appointed to their parishes for the greater part by patronizing nobles who cared little or nothing about the spiritual qualifications of the men they appointed. Here and there a true, holy man punctuated the darkness of this night by the clear shining of a blameless life. But such instances were so few as only to emphasize the surrounding gloom. This was much less true of the Dissenting Churches than of the Church of England. Yet even they were in a dispirited condition, and handicapped in practical work by their unfortunate doctrine of election and a limited atonement. The doctrine of conscious salvation had been long forgotten, and when revived and made prominent by Methodism, was condemned as the wildest fanaticism. It was under these conditions that Methodism arose.

John and Charles Wesley and George Whitefield, three young men in Oxford University, felt keenly this state of religion. They groaned also after personal holiness. With a number of other young men they made a habit of meeting in John Wesley's room—he was a tutor or fellow of Lincoln College—on Sunday evenings to study religious books, most of all the New Testament in Greek. They also visited the poor and sick, and the prisoners in

the jails. So earnest and regular were they that the other students nicknamed them "The Holy Club" and "Methodists."

But all their good works and study and fasting and prayers did not bring them peace. Not even when the Wesleys went as missionaries to the colonists and Indians of Georgia did they come to a conscious knowledge of pardoned sins. On shipboard they saw a party of Moravians who seemed to have what they wanted; for during a fierce storm, when all others were trembling with fear, these Moravians, who were going to seek a home in America, sang songs of praise. They helped Wesley somewhat; and on his return to London, in one of their meetings—for these German brethren had gotten a foothold there—in Aldergate Street, not far from the present post-office, John Wesley found peace. It was on the night of May 28, 1738. The clock pointed to a quarter of nine. The leader of the meeting was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans, and was pointing out the simple way of faith-salvation, when Wesley suddenly "felt his heart strangely warmed, and that he did trust Christ and him alone for salvation." With glowing face he arose and declared that his thirteen years' search and

mourning were ended: "I now for the first time feel that I do trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation. I have an assurance that he has taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death." That was the real beginning of Methodism. True, Charles Wesley, on the anniversary of Pentecost, one week before, had experienced the same change, and Whitefield some time before. But Whitefield was not a permanent factor in the Methodist movement, although he became a great blessing to the general work of God, and especially to the Calvinistic Churches. John Wesley was the organizer as well as the chief preacher of the Methodist movement, and to him is ascribed, by common consent, the honor of being the father of Methodism.

Wherever they could secure an open pulpit, John and Charles Wesley went forth declaring what God had done for their souls. Salvation from sin was their constant theme—a *free*, *felt*, and *full* salvation. It was declared to be free for all as against the prevailing notion that it was limited to the elect; it was declared to be felt or conscious, as opposed to the prevailing belief that no one could know that he was accepted of God; it was declared

to be a full salvation in opposition to the universal view that a person must continue sinning as long as he lived; and it was declared, too, that it might be experienced instantaneously, *now*, by simple faith.

The effect of this preaching was startling. Time and again as the preacher descended the pulpit steps he was met by a Church official with the words: "Sir, you can preach here no more." Soon, practically, all the churches of the kingdom were closed against John Wesley. Then he and his companions in the work took to preaching in the fields. Multitudes thronged to hear the Word. Men were smitten down under it as though they had been shot. Others groaned aloud or trembled from head to foot, while some flew into a violent rage, and threatened the preachers with everything but death. The fire spread all over England and Wales, and into Ireland. Thousands of converts were made, and these were organized into classes and societies, and chapels were built by them, though at first with no thought of organizing a separate Church. Mr. Wesley expected them all to remain members of the Church of England. It was only when they had been long treated with contempt and persecution by the Church authorities that they were

organized into an independent denomination.

The Methodist preachers were frequently greeted with mobs. They were pelted with stones and mud. Charles Wesley had his clothing torn almost off, and preached with the blood running down his face in rivulets more than once. Yet the more they were persecuted, the more they increased. The common people came to hear them gladly, after a time, and not a few of the learned and wealthy became their friends. The following is a case of conversion which is typical of hundreds: Barbara Kershore was the daughter of an English merchant living in a town in Ireland. Her father was a somewhat pompous and very proud Churchman. His wife embraced the Methodist faith, but kept it secret for fear of her husband. One night, in a Methodist meeting, Barbara was converted. On her way home her mother met her with a white face, saying: "Barbara, your father has heard of your conversion in a Methodist meeting, and is in a towering passion. He says you have disgraced the family, and that if you come home he will kill you. Do not come home until his anger cools." Barbara went to the house of a friend,

and remained until her father, some days later, sent word that if she would give up her fanaticism she might come home. This she refused to do; for she was willing to suffer rather than give up the people and faith which had brought such peace to her soul. The separation continued for a long time, Barbara carrying the father in prayer before the Throne continually. The outcome was that Mr. Kershore broke down completely, gave his heart to God, and his home became the center of Methodism for that community, Mr. Wesley preaching in the house more than once. The descendants of this heroic girl are active Methodists in America to-day, East and West, among them the writer.

By the time John Wesley had spent fifty years in spreading Methodism, it had come to a place of toleration and even respect. The societies enrolled a membership of one hundred and twenty thousand, with a half million more in more or less regular attendance on their services, while Mr. Wesley himself was received everywhere with the greatest marks of respect, "the populace turning out," as he humorously put it, "and standing agape, as though the king himself passed by." So great

was the spread and influence of Methodism that Mr. Wesley was led to exclaim again and again, "Behold, what hath God wrought!"

To-day twenty-five millions of people throughout the world class themselves as members or adherents of Methodist Churches.

CHAPTER VI.

HEROIC TIMES OF AMERICAN METHODISM.

THIRTEEN times did George Whitefield cross the Atlantic from England to America in carrying the gospel of a conscious and full salvation. I do not say "free salvation," for Whitefield believed in the doctrine of John Calvin—election and a limited atonement. He aroused an extraordinary interest in religion in America, and thousands were blessed under his ministry. But not being an organizer, as Wesley was, his work served only to enrich and build up existing Churches—the Congregational, Baptist, and Presbyterian, especially. One of his converts founded the Free-Will Baptist Church. Whitefield swept up and down the eastern coast of America, from Maine to Georgia, again and again, preaching to multitudes. He died at Newburyport, Mass., one night after preaching, and his dust lies there still.

It is to a woman, however, that the honor belongs of introducing the Methodist Church

into America. Barbara Heck was a German-Irish woman, if you can conceive such a thing. That is, she was born in Ireland, of German parentage. In 1760 she and a little company of neighbors, some of whom were also Methodists, came to New York City. There was no Methodist society in New York, and in time the love of the Methodist group doubtless waxed cold. One night, in 1765, some of them were engaged with worldly people in a game of cards, when Barbara Heck happened into the room. Her love had never waxed cold, neither had her courage; for she seized the pack of cards and threw them into the fire; and exhorted the players to a better life. Then she went to the home of Philip Embury, a somewhat timid local preacher, who had come from Ireland when she did, but who was hiding his preaching-light under a bushel, and told him he must begin to preach to these people. He did so. The outcome was a Methodist society which in two years increased to quite respectable numbers.

One night in February, 1767, the door of their preaching-room opened and in walked a stalwart-looking man wearing the uniform of a British captain, and with his sword at his side. He had his right eye covered with a shade—

or rather the place where the eye had been was so covered, for he had lost the eye in battle. His right arm bore the mark of a wound received in scaling the Heights of Abraham with Wolfe at Quebec. The little company of Methodists were somewhat alarmed by the warlike appearance of the stranger, but when he joined heartily in their songs and prayers, their hearts rejoiced, and they gave him a royal welcome. He was Captain Thomas Webb, of the British army, and he proved to be a local preacher of unusual eloquence and devotion. He took turns with Philip Embury thereafter, in preaching, and throngs of people came out to hear them. They fixed up a large sail-loft for a preaching-place, in true Pauline fashion; but soon it, too, became too small. Then a church was erected; and so Methodism got a strong foothold in New York, and spread all over the Eastern States. The church building, however, was the plan of the devoted woman who organized the first service—Barbara Heck. Through her faith and energy, largely, the work was carried to a successful completion.

About the same time that Methodism was thus getting a foothold in New York, another Irish local preacher, named Robert Strawbridge,

began preaching at Sam's Creek, in Maryland. While the Methodist society founded there was small, it sent out four or five preachers in those early days, and was the means of giving Methodism a fine start in Maryland. That region has been, from that time until now, a stronghold of Methodism.

In the latter part of 1769, in answer to an urgent call from these new societies in the New World, Mr. Wesley sent over Richard Boardman and Joseph Pilmoor to take charge of the work. Under their labors, and that of local preachers, the work continued to spread until, in the providence of God, a young man was sent over to take general charge of the work in America, who was to be to Methodism in the New World almost what Mr. Wesley was in Great Britain. That young man was Francis Asbury. In devotion to God, in self-denying toil, in hardships borne without murmuring, in carrying the burdens of all the Churches and preachers, in preaching daily, sometimes as early as five o'clock in the morning, in enduring hunger and fatigue and poverty, in riding through untracked forests, in risking life among wild beasts and wild Indians and outlaws, in enduring frosts and fevers and miasmas and multifarious microbes, he was an ex-

ample and leader to all the heroic preachers in an age when to be a Methodist preacher required more courage and self-sacrifice than to be a soldier or a pioneer. Asbury superintended the work of the Methodist itinerants throughout America for forty-four years—for twelve years as the representative of Mr. Wesley, and from 1784, when the Methodist Episcopal Church of America was formally organized, as bishop of that Church by its own vote. Every year he traveled over the whole connection from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico, his travels averaging 6,000 miles a year. And his travels were not in Pullman sleepers, or in comfortable carriages or stages, but chiefly on horseback, and often through swamps and trackless woods and over storm-swept prairies. More than once his journey through the wilderness had to be protected by armed hunters, in bands of twenty-five to fifty, to protect him from the Indians.

His preachers followed the wagon-tracks of the pioneer. Wherever the cabin of the lonely emigrant was reared, whether in the woods of Ohio and Indiana and Mississippi, or on the prairies of Illinois, the Methodist itinerant followed. Crossing the mysterious mountains, swimming swollen streams, trav-

ersing trackless plains, following a blazed path through the forests, wading the miry swamps—on, on, sped these early itinerants, like the deerhound in the chase, in their eager quest for deathless human souls. The epic of the early Methodist itinerant has not yet been written. It furnishes a theme for a Homer or a Milton. Richmond Nolley was one of those early itinerants. From South Carolina, where Conference had been held in 1812, he and three fellow-itinerants proceeded three hundred and fifty miles west, through Georgia, into Mississippi, where their new fields of labor lay. On the way they had to swim deep creeks, and to camp out eleven nights. Out in the wild region where Nolley's unmapped territory lay he came, one day, on a fresh wagon-track. On the search for anything that had a soul, he followed it, and came upon an emigrant family that had just pitched on the ground of its future home. The man was unlimbering his team, and the wife was busy around the fire. "What!" exclaimed the settler upon hearing the salutation of his visitor, and taking a glance at his unmistakable appearance, "have you found me already? Another Methodist preacher! I left Virginia to

get out of reach of them, went to a new settlement in Georgia, and thought to have a long whet, but they got my wife and daughter into the Church; then I found a good piece of land in this late purchase [Choctaw Corner], and was sure I would have some peace from the preachers, and here is one before my wagon is unloaded!" Nolley gave him small comfort: "My friend, if you go to heaven you will find Methodist preachers there; if to hell, I am afraid you will find some there; and you see," he said, "how it is in this world; so you had better make terms with us and be at peace."

This same Nolley, on his way to his last appointment, which lay in the wilderness beyond the Mississippi River, had to pass through a region occupied only by Indians. Traveling on until evening he found himself at an Indian village. Not wishing to remain among the savages he pressed on till he came to a river swollen by heavy rains. He urged his horse into the flood, but was swept off the animal's back, and it swam back to the bank they had left. Nolley saved himself and reached the further bank. He struggled forward through the woods, hoping to reach a house which lay a few miles away. But overcome by exposure,

he sank down to die. And there a traveler fonnd him the next day, "lying extended upon the wet leaves, his left hand upon his breast, and the other lying by his side. His knees were muddy, and there were the prints of them on the damp ground;" showing that his last act had been to worship the Lord he loved so well. It reminds us of the death of David Livingstone on his knees in a mud hut in Eastern Africa, praying for the savages that were all about him.

The same heroic spirit filled the breasts of the early itinerants everywhere. Whether a Jesse Lee in New England, or a Russel Bigelow in Ohio, or a John Strange in Indiana, or a Jacob Young in Kentucky, he was the same daring, patient, love-consumed evangelist. To them the words of their Lord could be applied: "The zeal of thy house hath eaten me up." Their faith was, indeed, "Christianity in earnest." Would to God that we of this new generation might kindle anew the flames of devotion that burned on these altars of the fathers! Would to God that there might be a new birth of Methodism—a new birth of apostolic Christianity, which is all that pure Methodism is—and then shall we cross the threshold of the

twentieth century with the swing of conquest in our tread; and before the new century's sun shall have reached its meridian we shall see America rebaptized in the Christian faith, and the ends of the earth brought under the sway of the Prince of Peace!

CHAPTER VII.

BATTLE-FLAGS OF THE CHURCH.

A VISITOR in the Illinois State-house, at Springfield, is impressed by the sight of the old flags among the war relics there. They once floated over the heads of Union troops in the battles of the Civil War. They are furled now, and only the frayed edges and dark scarlet stains declare the conflicts through which they passed. But, though folded, they still stand for the principles that underlie our Republic; and were those principles again attacked, a militant host would unfurl those flags again, and die, if need be, in their defense.

Our articles of religion are the battle-flags of Methodism. Old they are, and odd in language because old. They seem to have been set aside—not forgotten, but preserved as mementos of the past rather than as truths that deal with the present. They have the marks of battle on them; you almost smell the smoke as you turn them. Over half of them grew out of the conflict with Romanism, when Protestantism was fighting for its life. That conflict

is now happily past; but were the principles for which these battle-flags stand again attacked, they would call to their support as militant and mighty a host as rallied under them in days of old. It is well for you who are just entering the Church to read these Articles of Religion carefully and understandingly. It is well for you to know

> "What anvils rang, what hammers beat,
> In what a forge and what a heat
> Were shaped the anchors of our hope."

ARTICLES OF RELIGION.

I. *Of Faith in the Holy Trinity.*—There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body or parts, of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; the maker and preserver of all things, visible and invisible. And in unity of this Godhead there are three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

II. *Of the Word, or Son of God, who was made very Man.*—The Son, who is the Word of the Father, the very and eternal God, of one substance with the Father, took man's nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin; so that two whole and perfect natures, that is to say, the Godhead and Manhood, were joined together in one person, never to be divided; whereof is one Christ, very God and very Man, who truly suffered, was crucified, dead, and buried, to reconcile his Father to us, and to be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for the actual sins of men.

III. *Of the Resurrection of Christ.*—Christ did truly rise again from the dead, and took again his body, with all things appertaining to the perfection of man's nature, wherewith he ascended into heaven, and there sitteth until he return to judge all men at the last day.

IV. *Of the Holy Ghost.*—The Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, is of one substance, majesty, and glory with the Father and the Son, very and eternal God.

V. *The Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures for Salvation.*—The Holy Scriptures contain all things necessary to salvation; so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an article of faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation. In the name of the Holy Scriptures, we do understand those canonical books of the Old and New Testament of whose authority was never any doubt in the Church. The names of the canonical books are:

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, The First Book of Samuel, The Second Book of Samuel, The First Book of Kings, The Second Book of Kings, The First Book of Chronicles, the Second Book of Chronicles, The Book of Ezra, The Book of Nehemiah, The Book of Esther, The Book of Job, The Psalms; The Proverbs, Ecclesiastes or The Preacher, Cantica or Song of Solomon, Four Prophets the greater, Twelve Prophets the less.

All the books of the New Testament, as they are commonly received, we do receive and account canonical.

VI. *Of the Old Testament.*—The Old Testament is not contrary to the New; for both in the Old and New Testament everlasting life is offered to mankind by Christ, who is the only Mediator between God and Man, being both God and Man. Wherefore they are not to be heard who feign that the old fathers did look only for transitory promises. Although the law given from God by Moses as touching ceremonies and rites doth not bind Christians, nor ought the civil precepts thereof of necessity be received in any commonwealth; yet, notwithstanding, no Christian whatsoever is free from the obedience of the commandments which are called moral.

VII. *Of Original or Birth Sin.*—Original sin standeth not in the following of Adam (as the Pelagians do vainly talk), but it is the corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam, whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and of his own nature inclined to evil, and that continually.

VIII. *Of Free Will.*—The condition of man after the fall of Adam is such that he can not turn and prepare himself by his own natural strength and works, to faith, and calling upon God; wherefore we have no power to do good works, pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working with us, when we have that good will.

IX. *Of the Justification of Man.*—We are accounted righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our own works or deservings. Wherefore, that we are justified by faith only is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort.

X. *Of Good Works.*—Although good works, which are the fruits of faith, and follow after justification, can not put away our sins, and endure the severity of God's judgments; yet are they pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, and spring out of a true and lively faith, insomuch that by them a lively faith may be as evidently known as a tree is discerned by its fruits.

XI. *Of Works of Supererogation.*—Voluntary works—besides, over, and above God's commandments—which are called works of supererogation, can not be taught without arrogancy and impiety. For by them men do declare that they do not only render unto God as much as they are bound to do, but that they do more for his sake than of bounden duty is required; whereas Christ saith plainly, When ye have done all that is commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants.

XII. *Of Sin after Justification.*—Not every sin willingly committed after justification is the sin against the Holy Ghost, and unpardonable. Wherefore, the grant of repentance is not to be denied to such as fall into sin after justification; after we have received the Holy Ghost, we may depart from grace given, and fall into sin, and, by the grace of God, rise again and amend our lives. And therefore they are to be condemned who say they can no more sin as long as they live here; or deny the place of forgiveness to such as truly repent.

XIII. *Of the Church.*—The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men in which the pure word of God is preached, and the Sacraments duly administered according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same.

XIV. *Of Purgatory.*—The Romish doctrine concerning purgatory, pardon, worshiping and adoration, as well of images as of relics, and also invocation of saints, is a fond thing, vainly invented and grounded upon no warrant of Scripture, but repugnant to the Word of God.

XV. *Of Speaking in the Congregation in such a Tongue as the People Understand.*—It is a thing plainly repugnant to the Word of God, and the custom of the primitive Church, to have public prayer in the Church, or to administer the Sacraments, in a tongue not understood by the people.

XVI. *Of the Sacraments.*—Sacraments ordained of Christ are not only badges or tokens of Christian men's profession, but rather they are certain signs of grace, and God's good will toward us, by the which he doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken, but also strengthen and confirm, our faith in him.

There are two Sacraments ordained of Christ our Lord in the Gospel; that is to say, Baptism and the Supper of the Lord.

Those five commonly called Sacraments, that is to say, confirmation, penance, orders, matrimony, and extreme unction, are not to be counted for Sacraments of the Gospel; being such as have partly grown out of the *corrupt* following of the Apostles, and partly are states of life allowed in the Scriptures, but yet have not the like nature of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, because they have not any visible sign or ceremony ordained of God.

The Sacraments were not ordained of Christ to be gazed upon, or to be carried about; but that we should duly use them. And in such only as worthily receive

the same they have a wholesome effect or operation; but they that receive them unworthily, purchase to themselves condemnation, as St. Paul saith, 1 Cor. xi, 29.

XVII. *Of Baptism.*—Baptism is not only a sign of profession and mark of difference whereby Christians are distinguished from others that are not baptized; but it is also a sign of regeneration or the new birth. The baptism of young children is to be retained in the Church.

XVIII. *Of the Lord's Supper.*—The Supper of the Lord is not only a sign of the love that Christians ought to have among themselves one to another, but rather is a Sacrament of our redemption by Christ's death; insomuch that to such as rightly, worthily, and with faith receive the same, the bread which we break is a partaking of the body of Christ: and likewise the cup of blessing is a partaking of the blood of Christ.

Transubstantiation, or the change of the substance of bread and wine in the Supper of our Lord, can not be proved by Holy Writ, but is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture, overthroweth the nature of a Sacrament, and hath given occasion to many superstitions.

The body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten in the Supper, only after a heavenly and spiritual manner. And the means whereby the body of Christ is received and eaten in the Supper is faith.

The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was not by Christ's ordinance reserved, carried about, lifted up, or worshiped.

XIX. *Of both Kinds.*—The cup of the Lord is not to be denied to the Lay People; for both the parts of the

Lord's Supper, by Christ's ordinance and commandment, ought to be administered to all Christians alike.

XX. *Of the one Oblation of Christ, Finished upon the Cross.*—The offering of Christ, once made, is that perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual; and there is none other satisfaction for sin but that alone. Wherefore the sacrifice of masses, in the which it is commonly said that the priest doth offer Christ for the quick and the dead, to have remission of pain or guilt, is a blasphemous fable and dangerous deceit.

XXI. *Of the Marriage of Ministers.*—The Ministers of Christ are not commanded by God's law either to vow the estate of single life, or to abstain from marriage; therefore it is lawful for them, as for all other Christians, to marry at their own discretion, as they shall judge the same to serve best to godliness.

XXII. *Of the Rites and Ceremonies of Churches.*—It is not necessary that rites and ceremonies should in all places be the same, or exactly alike; for they have been always different, and may be changed according to the diversity of countries, times, and men's manners, so that nothing be ordained against God's Word. Whosoever, through his private judgment, willingly and purposely doth openly break the rites and ceremonies of the Church to which he belongs, which are not repugnant to the Word of God, and are ordained and approved by common authority, ought to be rebuked openly (that others may fear to do the like), as one that offendeth against the common order of the Church, and woundeth the consciences of weak brethren.

Every particular Church may ordain, change, or

abolish rites and ceremonies, so that all things may be done to edification.

XXIII. *Of the Rulers of the United States of America.*—The President, the Congress, the General Assemblies, the Governors, and the Councils of State, *as the Delegates of the People*, are the Rulers of the United States of America, according to the division of power made to them by the Constitution of the United States and by the Constitutions of their respective States. And the said States are a sovereign and independent Nation, and ought not to be subject to any foreign jurisdiction.*

XXIV. *Of Christian Men's Goods.*—The riches and goods of Christians are not common, as touching the right, title, and possession of the same, as some do falsely boast. Notwithstanding, every man ought, of such things as he possesseth, liberally to give alms to the poor, according to his ability.

XXV. *Of a Christian Man's Oath.*—As we confess that vain and rash swearing is forbidden Christian men by our Lord Jesus Christ and James his Apostle; so we judge that the Christian religion doth not prohibit, but that a man may swear when the magistrate requireth, in a cause of faith and charity, so it be done according to the Prophet's teaching, in justice, judgment, and truth.

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*As far as it respects civil affairs, we believe it the duty of Christians, and especially of all Christian Ministers, to be subject to the supreme authority of the country where they may reside, and to use all laudable means to enjoin obedience to the powers that be; and therefore it is expected that all our Preachers and People, who may be under the British or any other Government, will behave themselves as peaceable and orderly subjects.

The first four Articles, and perhaps the sixth, seventh, and eighth, also the twelfth, twenty-fourth, and twenty-fifth, are the commonly-received doctrines of the Christian Church, both Protestant and Roman Catholic. The statement of them grew out of the conflict of the Church with paganism or with fanatical or heretical sects. All the other Articles of Religion—fourteen in all—grew out of the conflict with Romanism. And these fourteen Articles are such as Protestant Churches everywhere receive; indeed, with the exception of the twenty-third, they are abbreviated from the thirty-nine Articles of Religion of the Church of England, but with "all traces of Calvanism and ritualism eliminated."

In addition to these twenty-five formally stated Articles of Religion, the Methodist Episcopal Church makes the sermons of John Wesley and his Notes on the New Testament of equal authority as a source of doctrine. The doctrines most emphasized by Mr. Wesley in these sermons were Free Salvation, Felt Salvation, Full Salvation; or, to state them more exactly, Methodism holds that grace is free, and is extended, because of the atonement, to all men. Regeneration is that act of the Holy Spirit in answer to man's faith by which the

principle of a new and holy life is implanted in the human soul. The regeneration of the man is accompanied by his justification and adoption into the family of God. Justification means that the sinner is forgiven for his past sins, and is treated as though he had never sinned. (See Article IX.) Adoption is the sinner's reception into the family of God. It is the privilege of the believer to know that he has been thus adopted as a child of God by the witness of God's Spirit. The Witness of the Spirit is a conviction wrought in the soul by the Holy Spirit that his sins are forgiven, and that he is accepted as a child of God. Full salvation stands for entire sanctification. Mr. Wesley taught, and has been followed more or less fully by the later Church in teaching, that we may be cleansed from all sin of nature and disposition—inbred sin, commonly called—and be enabled to love God with all the soul, mind, and strength. To quote a standard definition of entire sanctification: "It is that act of divine grace usually wrought in the soul subsequent to regeneration, whereby the believer is enabled to love God with all the mind, soul, and strength, and his neighbor as himself."

It was the preaching of salvation as the privilege of every son of Adam, and that it

might be consciously enjoyed, and that it might be full and complete, transforming the whole inner character as well as outward conduct, that separated Methodism from the ordinary teachings of Protestant Churches, and that drew the fire of so many foes. Yet it was these teachings also that made it mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds of sin.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PICKET-LINES OF METHODISM.

METHODISM has always been on the "firing line" of civilization. From the time when the itinerant followed the wagon-tracks of the early settlers, as they pushed their way to the frontier regions, until now, Methodism has always kept its eye on the hard and dangerous fields, and has sought to capture them and transform them for Christ. Even in our own country much of this pioneer territory still remains. The story of the sufferings undergone by frontier preachers to-day is a heroic narrative. Almost equally great is the privation endured by the little bands of people to whom they preach here and there throughout the far West, worshiping in sod houses, or, at best, school-houses; or in pine shanties in the mountains of the South. These self-sacrificing people are attempting to seize a civilization that is still in the gristle, and mold it for God before it shall have hardened into permanent ungodliness. We have a great benevolent society in the Church which is helping

them—three such societies, indeed. One is the Missionary Society, which helps these struggling little bands to support their ministers, by the grant of a small amount of money each year. The second is the Woman's Home Missionary Society, which sends clothing and other supplies to the preachers. The third is the Church Extension Society, which, when these frontier bands try to build, grants them a long-time loan, or, in some cases, a gift outright, of one or two or five hundred dollars, always with the proviso, however, that a much greater sum of money must be furnished by the people on the ground. In this way more than 11,000 churches have been built, nearly all of which are now self-supporting and contributing to the funds of this society. The headquarters of this society are in Philadelphia, and every Methodist is a member of it, and is expected by his contributions each year to advance its work. In spite of all the churches that it has helped to build, over 2,500 little congregations are still without churches to cover them.

Another picket-line of Methodism is among the Negroes of the South. More or less, everywhere, but especially in the South, race prejudice stands, like a mailed giant, between

eight millions of our fellow-citizens and a white man's chance in life. Only one generation out of bondage—out of a condition where they were treated as cattle—it is not to be wondered at that the Negroes have not sprung into full-fledged intelligence and virtue at a bound. The wonder is that so many of them have been able to take their place alongside the best of their white brothers in attainments and character. They were really the Nation's wards, when they came out of slavery; but as the Nation never recognized the relation, they have become the wards of the Church. To help meet this obligation the Freedmen's Aid and Southern Education Society of our Church was organized. It is supporting fifty academies and colleges in the South in behalf of colored and "poor white" youth, the latter left by the war in as hopeless a condition as the Negroes. This picket-line of Methodism has thrown itself against the serried ranks of ignorance and superstition with such success that, all over the South, Christian teachers and preachers, and physicians and artisans, are pouring forth to achieve among these unfortunate millions a new civilization. It is no small thing, and prophetic of far more, that among the one hundred thousand Negroes

who have been trained in our own schools and those of our sister Churches, not one has ever been accused of that crime which has, more often than any other, been charged against the Negro race, and for which they have paid so fearful and so frequent a penalty. Of the Freedmen's Aid Society, also, every Methodist is a birthright member. Your gifts make possible its splendid work.

The Sunday-school Union is another picket-line of Methodism. It aids in establishing and carrying on Sunday-schools in neglected and pioneer territory. The Tract Society sows broadcast the "leaves for the healing of the nations." The leaflets and books of the Tract Society go, not only to our own, but to foreign lands. If you could read the story of Newman Hall's "Come to Jesus," or of "The Dairyman's Daughter," or of "Billy Bray," or of other tracts and booklets that are sent out by this Society, and the marvelous good they have accomplished, you would never again "despise the day of small things."

General Toral, the Spanish commander at Santiago, thought the Americans a nation of hypocrites, because in the pocket of well-nigh every slain American was found a copy of the Bible. That is what Protestant Christianity

aims to do, to put a Bible into every man's pocket. Our own and sister Churches have united in supporting the American Bible Society, which seeks to put the Bible into every home in America, and to publish it in the native tongue of every people and tribe on earth. In the eighty-four years of its existence this Society has published sixty-seven million copies of the Scriptures. These have been either given away or sold at such low figures as to put them within the reach of all. About half of these Bibles have gone to foreign lands.

Farthest out of all Methodism's picket lines is her Foreign Missionary Picket-line. In view of its heroic achievements it ought rather be called our Foreign Missionary Battle-line. Wesley declared, "The world is my parish." The Methodism of to-day is moving up to his declaration. It thrills us to know that Methodist altar-fires girdle the earth; that the hymns we sing are echoed by peoples of strange tongues all over the world; that the truths which led us to Jesus, and are building up us in holiness, provoke the tears that fall like raindrops over dusky faces in India, and China, and Japan, and Africa, and the islands of the sea, and inspire a devotion rivaling that of the early Methodists. Indeed, it is an inter-

esting fact that the type of Christianity being developed in our mission fields more nearly resembles that of the early Christian Church, both in its remarkable virtues and in its blemishes, than does the Christianity of our Christian lands. Our Church has sent missionaries to Africa, Bulgaria, Italy, Switzerland, Finland, Germany, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, South America, Mexico, Japan, Korea, China, India, Burmah, Malaysia, and to three of our lately-acquired possessions—Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines.

In some of these mission fields the success of our missionaries has been phenomenal. We have over twenty thousand members and probationers in China, and over eighty thousand in India. In both these countries thousands could be gathered into the Church immediately if we had sufficient workers properly to instruct and train them. Great numbers of people are denied baptism because we have not sufficient preachers and teachers to teach them. Indeed, the whole missionary situation may be summed up in one word—*Opportunity.* The walls of the nations are lying flat, and over them extend the great highways of opportunity into the heart of every heathen land. Medical missions afford a wonderful highway

of opportunity; schools for the children of pagans afford another; zenana visitation another; and the printing-press makes still another, because of the aroused interest of the Oriental peoples in everything Occidental. Never since the world began has there ever been such an opportunity before the Church of God as exists to-day. And never were there so many young men and women in our own land ready to enter those open doors. Our joy is that this is so. Our shame is that the majority of those Methodists to whom God has given money are indifferent to this Macedonian call. "The nation that shortens its swords lengthens its boundaries." It is as true of a Church as of a nation. Would to God that this aggressive motto might be written on the banners of our Methodism! To that end I trust you will consecrate your talents and your money and your prayers!

Those of you who are women have the privilege, not only of helping to support the picket-lines already mentioned, but of directing two great picket-lines of your own—the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society and the Woman's Home Missionary Society. As their names indicate, they seek to win to Christ and train into a noble womanhood women and girls; the

former Society, the women of pagan lands; the latter, those of our own America. The work of the Woman's Home Missionary Society is in behalf of the neglected classes of our cities, immigrant women who land at our seaport cities, the Negroes and "poor whites" of the South, and the frontiers of our country in the North, the West, and in Alaska. The Woman's Foreign Missionary Society, in its zenana visitation and Bible-woman work, and in its medical dispensary, and educational departments, has proved itself one of the mightiest of modern evangelizing agencies.

We ought not to leave this subject without a glance at the training-schools of the men and women who are on the picket-lines of Methodism; viz., the colleges of the Church. They are the West Points of Methodism. There the Church's leaders are trained, for the greater part; although we must not fail to recognize the splendid work of those men who have achieved leadership for themselves and blessing for the Church without college training. In general, however, it is true that the great leaders of the Church have come from college halls, in which they learned to combine the culture of the intellect with the nurture of the soul. Wesley came from Oxford, and Peter

Böhler, who led him into light, came from Jena, and Luther came from Wittenberg, and Paul came from Gamaliel's college at Jerusalem. It is true of the lesser leaders of Christianity to-day that they come from the best schools, as a rule. The schools of our Church make it possible for you, young men and women, to secure an education at the cost of only your books and board. And the Board of Education of Methodism extends loans to such young men and women as desire it, who are preparing for the ministry, or for teaching in home or foreign missionary fields. We owe it to these picket-lines of Methodism that their West Points be well taken care of; that they lack not equipment, the best of teachers, and the youth of our homes to train as leaders for God and humanity.

CHAPTER IX.

HOW METHODISTS ARE GOVERNED.

IN the local Church of which we are members, the governing body is the Quarterly Conference.* It is composed of the class-leaders, stewards, trustees, Sunday-school superintendent, Epworth League president, local preachers and exhorters of the Church, together with the pastor and any superannuated ministers who may be residents of the charge. The presiding elder of the district presides at the Quarterly Conference. The class-leaders are appointed by the pastor. The stewards, trustees, and exhorters are nominated by the pastor, but must be confirmed by the Quarterly Conference before they are counted elected. Local preachers are made such by action of the Quarterly Conference.

The Quarterly Conference has the oversight of all the work of the Church. All the Church committees are appointed by it, and report to

*An excellent method of securing the interest of a probationers' class in this subject is to hold a mock Quarterly Conference composed of probationers.

it. Sunday-school superintendents and Epworth League presidents, while elected by their respective organizations, must be confirmed by the Quarterly Conference before they can take their seats. All officers of the Church, including the pastor, make their reports to it. It has charge of all the financial interests of the Church. It also elects the Church's representative to the Lay Electoral Conference, which meets once in four years.

The Official Board—a name most of you are more familiar with than that of the Quarterly Conference—is composed of the same officials as the Quarterly Conference. It meets once a month, regularly; but called meetings may be held in addition. The pastor is president of the Board. Its meetings are devoted chiefly to financial interests and such other matters as the Quarterly Conference may commit to it. It is, however, the creature of the Quarterly Conference, and all its acts must pass in review before that body.

Some charges hold—and all may hold—a Leaders' and Stewards' Meeting, which inquires after the spiritual and temporal interests of the charge. In all cases it is also the creature of the Quarterly Conference. In most charges the Official Board transacts the work

assigned to the Leaders' and Stewards' Meeting.

The District Conference is a gathering of all the preachers, local preachers, exhorters, and district stewards in a presiding elder's district, together with one Sunday-school superintendent and one Epworth League president and class-leader from each charge. It arranges appointments for the local preachers of the district, and has the oversight of these local preachers, recommending any for orders or for admission to the Annual Conference (as regular pastors), and examining them in the studies prescribed for local preachers. The District Conference also has oversight in a general way of all the work in the district. Inasmuch, however, as the holding of District Conferences is optional, it may hardly be classed as a governing body, strictly speaking. Where no District Conferences are held, the work which would regularly be performed by it falls to the Quarterly Conferences of the several charges.

Next larger than the District Conference is the Annual Conference. Unlike the two preceding bodies, it is composed of ministers only. The number of ministers varies. No Conference can be organized with less than

twenty. Some Conferences have between three and four hundred. There are one hundred and twenty-four Annual Conferences in Methodism at this time (January, 1900), including those in foreign lands. This does not include "missions," however.

The Annual Conference can not legislate for or in any way control the action of local Church members. It deals wholly with the ministry. It can admit such men to the ministry as it sees fit. It can try, expel, or otherwise discipline its ministerial members. It fixes their appointments; it hears their reports concerning the spiritual and temporal condition of their charges. In a word, it oversees all the ministers and their work for the territory comprised within an Annual Conference. And once in four years it elects representatives from its number to the General Conference.

All the work of the Annual Conference, the District Conference, and the Quarterly Conference must be done in harmony with the law of the Church, which is found in the Book of Discipline.

The supreme governing body of Methodism is the General Conference. It makes the laws. It changes, when it deems it best, the Book of

Discipline. This is true, however, within limitations which are carefully marked. That is, the General Conference may change any part of the law of the Church except certain doctrinal and governmental principles which are considered fundamental. These it may not change. As a matter of fact, it is very difficult to change anything of very great importance. Large bodies, like a General Conference, move slowly in making changes.

The General Conference meets once in four years, and continues in session for one month. It is composed of ministers from the Annual Conferences, one for each forty-five. An equal number of laymen is elected from the Churches within the bounds of an Annual Conference.

The General Conference has supervision of world-wide Methodism; that is, of the Methodist Episcopal Church. It makes laws for the government of the entire Church, just as Congress makes laws for our country. It elects our bishops; also the officers of our great benevolent societies, the editors of our official Church papers, and the superintendents (called agents) of our important publishing interests.

CHAPTER X.

METHODIST "DO N'TS."

METHODISM has always placed the emphasis on the life rather than on the creed. Her theology is broad. Her doctrines, with scarcely an exception, are such as are accepted by the Evangelical Protestant Churches generally. Yet these sister Evangelical Churches require subscription to some doctrines which Methodism does not, and happily for the peace of the Church does not. For example, the Presbyterian Church has a very rigid theory of Biblical inspiration in its creed. Methodism has the moderate yet adequate statement: "The Holy Scriptures contain all things necessary to salvation." But while Methodism is thus liberal in its creed, it requires much when it comes to the personal character and life of its members. Mr. Wesley declared that the design of God in raising up Methodism was to "spread Scriptural holiness over these lands." In 1743 he and his brother Charles issued a letter of advice to the societies of Methodists defining in what holy liv-

ing consists, and pointing out practices of a sinful or misleading tendency in society about them. These advices have ever since been known as the "General Rules" of Methodist societies, and here in America are a part of the constitution of our Church. They raise up a high standard of personal character, as was natural enough since they were formed amid the glowing fires of the mightest revival of heart religion since the days of the apostles. Yet who will say that they raise a higher standard than does the New Testament? The following are the

GENERAL RULES OF THE CHURCH.

There is only one condition previously required of those who desire admission into these societies: a desire to flee the wrath to come, and to be saved from their sins. But wherever this is really fixed in the soul, it will be shown by its fruits. It is therefore expected of all who continue therein, that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation by observing the following rules:

First. By doing no harm, by avoiding evil of every kind, especially that which is most generally practised; such as—

The taking of the name of God in vain.

The profaning the day of the Lord, either by doing ordinary work therein, or by buying or selling.

Drunkenness, buying or selling spirituous liquors,

or drinking them, except in cases of extreme necessity.

Slaveholding, buying or selling slaves.

Fighting, quarreling, brawling, brother going to law with brother; returning evil for evil, or railing for railing; the using many words in buying or selling.

The buying or selling goods that have not paid the duty.

The giving or taking things on usury, that is, unlawful interest.

Uncharitable or unprofitable conversation, particularly speaking evil of magistrates or of ministers.

Doing unto others as we would not they should do unto us.

Doing what we know is not for the glory of God, as:

The putting on of gold and costly apparel.

The taking such diversions as can not be used in the name of the Lord Jesus.

The singing those songs, or reading those books, which do not tend to the knowledge or love of God.

Softness and needless self indulgence.

Laying up treasure on earth.

Borrowing without a probability of paying; or taking up goods without a probability of paying for them.

It is expected of all who continue in these societies, that they shall continue to evidence their desire of salvation,

Second. By doing good; by being in every kind merciful after their power; as they have opportunity, doing good of every possible sort, and, as far as possible, to all men.

To their bodies, of the ability which God giveth, by giving food to the hungry, by clothing the naked, by visiting or helping those that are sick or in prison.

To their souls, by instructing, reproving, or exhorting all we have any intercourse with, trampling under foot that enthusiastic (fanatical) doctrine, that "we are not to do good unless our hearts be free to it." (That is, unless we feel like it.)

By doing good, especially to them that are of the household of faith, or groaning so to be; employing them preferably to others; buying one of another; helping each other in business; and so much the more because the world will love its own and them *only*.

By all possible diligence and frugality, that the gospel be not blamed.

By running with patience the race set before them, denying themselves, and taking up their cross daily; submitting to bear the reproach of Christ, to be as the filth and offscouring of the world; and looking that men should say all manner of evil of them, *falsely*, for the Lord's sake.

It is expected of all who desire to continue in these societies, that they shall continue to evidence their desire of salvation,

Third. By attending upon all the ordinances of God; such are:

The Public Worship of God.
The Ministry of the Word, either read or expounded.
The Supper of the Lord.
Family and private prayer.
Searching the Scriptures.
Fasting or Abstinence.

In addition to the above General Rules the Church has formulated certain "Special Advices," or Rules.

I. TEMPERANCE.

The substance of the Rule on Temperance is:

We regard voluntary total abstinence from all intoxicants as the true ground of personal temperance, and complete legal prohibition of the liquor traffic as the duty of civil government.

II. DRESS.

Let all our people be exhorted to conform to the spirit of the apostolic precept, not to adorn themselves "with gold, or pearls, or costly array." (1 Tim. ii, 9.)

III. MARRIAGE.

We do not prohibit our people from marrying persons who are not of our Church, provided such persons have the form and are seeking the power of godliness; but we are determined to discourage their marrying persons who do not come up to this description. Many of our members have married unawakened persons. This has produced bad effects; they have been either hindered for life, or have turned back to perdition.

IV. DIVORCE.

No divorce, except for adultery, shall be regarded by the Church as lawful; and no minister shall solemnize marriage in any case where there is a divorced husband or wife living; but this rule shall not apply to the innocent party to a divorce case for the cause of adultery, nor to divorced parties seeking to be reunited in marriage.

In addition to the foregoing special rules there is one against slave-buying and slave-holding, which we do not give here because

slavery is happily a thing of the past in America.

The discipline of the Church names "dancing, games of chance, theaters, horse-races, circuses, patronizing dancing-schools and attending dancing parties," as coming under the head of "diversions that can not be used in the name of the Lord Jesus." The excitation of the lower passions to which dancing so often leads; the immodesty and often positive indecency of so many of the plays that appear on the stage; and the gambling tendency of games of chance and horse-racing, together with the worldly associations and spiritually-deadening influences among which all these amusements commonly throw one, are the reasons for the Church's prohibition of them.

Yet it ought to be kept strongly in mind that these are only a few of many hurtful indulgences which are not named specifically. It is not wise that we should fix our mind on these evils so intently as to make them the sole or chief tests of Christian character. Many things not named specifically work just as harmful effects. If you make it an invariable rule to go nowhere, and to do nothing, in which you can not ask God's presence and guidance, you will be safe. If you keep your

heart warm and tender with love to God, you will find your hands so full of work for others that there will be no place in your life for questionable amusements. The music in your soul will satisfy.

"There are in this loud stunning tide
Of human woe and crime,
With whom the melodies abide
Of the everlasting chime;
Who ply life's tasks with busier feet
Because their secret souls a holier strain repeat."

CHAPTER XI.

HOW WE GOT OUR BIBLE.

CHILDHOOD'S idea of the Bible is of a book handed down, ready-made, from heaven, like Moses' tables of stone. As we grow older, we learn that the Bible is a Divine-human book. We learn that, "of old, holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." The Bible is the record of their utterances, and of the historical events which accompanied them, or which called them forth. Hence the Bible is a growth. It consists of sixty-six books, written by many different men. It was formerly called "The Writings" or "The Scriptures." It did not come to be spoken of as one book until the twelfth century A. D. The first of the Old Testament writings were from the pen of Moses, about 1500 years before Christ. The last of the Old Testament writings was probably the Book of Daniel, although it is possible that that place belongs to Malachi. The first New Testament book was Paul's First Epistle to the Thessalonians, written about the year 52 A. D. The

last New Testament book to be written was the Gospel of John, about 90 or 95 A. D. I suppose that if we could keep only one book of all the sixty-six, we would choose the Gospel of John; for it in a peculiar degree reveals the heart of Christ.

These sacred writings were not gathered into an exclusive collection for many years after they were written. Yet there has never been any serious questioning of any of the books of the Bible as we now have them. Those so-called sacred writings about which serious doubts did exist in the early Church have been separated from our canonical Scriptures, and are called "apocryphal writings." Polycarp, who was born about the year 69 A. D., and was a disciple of the apostle John, left writings in which were thirty-six quotations from the New Testament as we have it. Irenæus, of Lyons, 140–200 A. D., who knew Polycarp well, left writings containing 767 passages from the New Testament. Tertullian, who lived at Carthage, 160–230 A. D., left writings containing 3,000 quotations from the New Testament. From Tertullian's time to the present the Scriptures have been handed down to us in their present form beyond all shadow of doubt. Many copies were carefully

made by hand, and were preserved with scrupulous pains. In those days a copy of the Scriptures cost a small fortune; for that was before the invention of printing. Old copies of the Bible, more or less complete, have come down to us from the fifth and even the fourth century after Christ. How they were found, and how they had been preserved in old monasteries, etc., reads like a romance. Thus we have an unbroken line of testimony to the Bible from the time of the apostle John to the present day.

The revelation contained in the Bible is a revelation of moral and spiritual truth. Incidentally the Scriptures bring in much history, biography, and other matter. But these serve simply to set forth moral and spiritual principles. Long stretches of history are passed over in silence. Many of the greatest men of the chosen people of God are given the scantiest notice. The design seems to be to make use of simply those events which will illustrate the spiritual truths which God would reveal to men, and to give sufficiently the general trend of history to accomplish this same purpose. The historical writers are not always exact in their data, but they are always exact in the spiritual lessons which they

draw from them. They may be in error as to whether a king reigned this or that number of years, or had a less or greater number of men in his army; but they were exceedingly careful to state whether he obeyed God or not; and to state the consequences of that obedience or disobedience.

The revelation contained in the Bible is a *progressive* one. It proceeded from faint and fragmentary revelations to clearer and fuller revelations. In dealing with men, God took them as he found them, and accommodated his revelation to their understanding and ability to receive it. Hence it is that in the earlier legislation for the Hebrews you find some things that Jesus condemned: the Mosaic law of divorce, for example, and that of blood revenge. A race of slaves just escaped from bondage was not able to grasp the high truths which a people educated by generations of prophets and priests could. The time of their ignorance God bore with. But he kept increasing the light until, when that which was perfect was come, that which was only partial was done away.

And this leads us to the greatest fact of all; namely, that this progressive revelation had its culmination in Jesus Christ. He was the per-

fect revelation. All the revelations that had preceded were arcs and segments—He was the complete circle of revelation. The prophets had gotten glimpses of the truth, more or less adequate to their own and their generation's needs. Jesus *was* the truth. All the prophets were guide-boards along the highway of the centuries, pointing onward to Christ. Consciously or unconsciously, such they were. Jesus was the perfect and infallible revelation. Just as his life was the perfect life, by which we judge every life, whether that of prophet or apostle, so his teachings are the infallible teachings, by which we judge all other teachings, whether of priest or prophet or apostle. And in order that we may be in no doubt as to what Jesus really taught and did, God inspired four disciples to write accounts of his life and words, that in "the mouth of two or three witnesses every word might be established." Hence we know that it is no Matthew-colored or John-colored reflection of his teachings we have. The trancendent importance of the teachings of Jesus, as the core of revelation and the standard by which all the other sacred writings should be judged, is doubtless the reason why we have four apostolic lives of Christ instead of one.

We may liken the progress of revelation in the world to light breaking in upon a vast and dark cathedral. Man gropes his way in worship, scarcely discerning the presence of holy things. But yonder comes a pencil of light: it is God's revelation to Abraham. Yonder enters another ray—God's revelation to Jacob. Yonder is still another—God revealing himself to Joseph. And now a window of light breaks through—it is God's revelation to Moses. The shapes of holy things appear plainly now. Then follow other and increasing bands of light as God makes his revelations to Samuel, and David, and Elijah, and Isaiah, and the prophets following. And then a pause for four long centuries, while the gloom seems to be gathering again—when suddenly there is a gleam of light, like that of the morning star, in John the Baptist, and then a glorious sunburst, not faintly dawning, but full-fledged from the height of the morning, and Jesus Christ floods with perfect light altar and aisles, nave and transepts, gallery and recess, tesselated floor and majestic dome! The Lord has come suddenly to his temple, and brought life and immortality to light forever. And the revelation of God to men is complete.

CHAPTER XII.

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE.

THE commonest way to study the Bible is to begin at Genesis and read through, a chapter a day. Many is the young convert who has begun that the day after his conversion, resolved to go through it or perish in the attempt. Usually, he perishes. Before he has gotten through Leviticus he has become discouraged by the unfamiliar words, or the lack of bearing on his own needs which much of the subject matter seems to possess, and gives up the study of the Word. The dust accumulates on his unopened Bible, and soon there is written over the grave of his dead religious experience: Died, of Heart Failure, Induced by Lack of Nourishment.

Poorer, even, than the foregoing method is the haphazard method—if it can be called a method;—that is, opening the Bible at random and reading where the eye falls. Like all careless work, it is poor work. Even beavers and ants do better; for they work with system

and forethought, or with an instinct that equals forethought.

The best place to begin the study of the Bible is with the New Testament. It is a law of education to begin with the simple and familiar, and proceed to the less familiar and more difficult. Hence the wise way for you to work is to begin with the Life of Jesus, as told by the evangelists, and go through the New Testament thoroughly and repeatedly. Then take up the Old Testament when the light of the New Covenant can shine back over the Old, illuminating it, and at the same time the Old will illustrate the New.

For beginners the most simple way is the best. I suggest, therefore, that you begin with Matthew—read it over at as few sittings as possible. Then go back and read it again, and again, say five times. You want to master Matthew. You want to become so familiar with it that you will know right where to turn in an instant for the Sermon on the Mount, or the Sending Forth of the Twelve Disciples, or the Transfiguration, or the Parables of the Last Judgment. The last time you go over it, look up the marginal references. That is a very fine method of getting parallel passages. It has cost the editor of

your edition of the Bible a great deal of labor, and will do you a great deal of good. Yet it is remarkable how few avail themselves of this ready-made concordance, It is better than a commentary.

Go over all the books of the New Testament in this way. The smaller books you can read at one sitting. Paul's epistles are only his letters. Would you think of reading a friend's letter by piecemeal, one page to-day, another to-morrow, and so on? Not even those sixteen-page letters, which some of you get, do you read so. Why not read Paul's letter, or James's, or John's, at one sitting? You will get his thought much better. You get the total impression.

You will be able to read the whole Bible in time in this way. If you have opportunity to join a class for Bible study, do it; especially if it requires independent work of you, such as giving the subjects treated in the various books and chapters you go over, or requires Bible readings to be prepared by you on given themes.

You will be called on to lead Epworth League and other devotional meetings. Sometimes this will involve the preparation of Bible readings on given subjects. For this

you will need a concordance. Most of you have Bibles with concordances. All of you ought to have such. Look up the leading word of your subject in the concordance. Go over all the texts that contain it, marking down those that are most striking, or that best suit the exact occasion. Look up the subject in the "Subject Index," which nearly all your Bibles contain. Treat those texts in the same way. For instance, suppose the subject is "Overcoming." In turning to the concordance, we find, in the Bible I hold in my hand, seven texts in which that word occurs. I turn to the "Subject Index," and find nine texts there in which it occurs. In these two sets of texts (which only slightly duplicate each other), you find enough to make an excellent Bible reading. Of course the Teachers' Bible concordance is incomplete. If you can have an unabridged concordance, you have a wider range. Young's, for instance, gives thirty-two passages on "Overcome." Nave's "Topical Bible"—the best book I know to aid one in preparing a Bible reading—gives over one hundred passages on "Overcoming" and "Perseverance." In preparing your Bible reading, close your subject with some Biblical scene or incident, if possible, that will vividly illustrate

the subject. In "Overcoming," take the scene of Jesus' wilderness temptation, for instance.

Above all, seek in prayer the illumination of the Holy Spirit. God reveals to "babes" what the wise and learned wrestle over in vain. Luther had read many a time, "The just shall live by faith;" but never did it become a truth of compelling power to him until that day when the Spirit flashed it into his heart as he was ascending Pilate's staircase on his knees, at Rome. Many a time we pass over some statement in the Bible without a second thought and without really apprehending its meaning. But at some hour when our hearts are uplifted to God for guidance, suddenly the meaning is flashed into our souls as by an inspiration, and we cry, "O! I see it! I see it!" For the earnest, prayerful student of the Bible, new light is evermore breaking forth from the Word of God.

Nothing is so important to the Christian as the study of the Word. It has saved the Church more than once. More than once in the history of the Church, when those seeds of decay that seem to lie at the heart of every human institution, had almost brought death to Christianity, new truth has sprung forth from the Word just in time to save the Church

from that awful fate. It has been said that every poisonous herb in nature has near it its antidote, if men only knew where it was. Whether that be true or not, it is certain that every poisonous error in the Church and individual Christian has its antidote in the Book. Its healing waters flow far as the curse is found.

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